



Housing Plan Implementation Committee

Date: December 2, 2021
Time: 7:30 PM to 8:30 PM
Location: Conducted via remote participation
Attendees: Karen Kelleher, Stephen Revilak, Patricia Worden, Jennifer Raitt, Kelly Lynema, Len Diggins
Guests: Mariann Donovan, Rebecca Gruber, Don Seltzer, Kristen Anderson, Jo Anne Preston, Guillermo Hamlin

DRAFT Minutes

1. Draft Housing Plan

Kelly began the meeting by inviting members of the committee to share feedback on the plan. Karen shared that it was valuable to have the data captured in the plan available, as well as a complement of potential paths forward to create affordable housing. She feels the process has been creative in trying to engage a diverse group of community members and expressed gratitude to everyone who participated in the process. She shared her thanks to the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Barrett Planning Group and Horsley Whitten for their work on the plan.

Patricia disagreed. She feels that the plan invites developers to exploit the Town and introduce 40B development to any area in town. She thinks the report is a waste of time because she believes the town has reached the 1.5% General Land Area Minimum. She said she does not thank the employees or the consultants for this plan. She thinks the report is damaging and hopes it will not be used.

Steve said he appreciated the maps that break down the various zoning districts. He knew the three-family district was small, but never realized how tiny it is. He is holding off on sharing more substantial comments until he has time to thoroughly read the plan. He disagreed with Patricia's comments on 40Bs and shared that having served on the ZBA for two 40Bs, one of which came out very well and one that was more challenging, he feels that 40B can be used as a helpful tool and an opportunity to tailor projects to meet community needs.

Karen added that there are more than two dozen strategies in the plan, and very few of them relate in any way to trying to attract market rate development. She

noted that 40B is a statewide tool that acknowledges the need to create affordable housing. When proactively used by communities it can create affordable housing, but when we fail to do so we lose control. She does not like that and wants Arlington to control our development and to prioritize affordable housing development. She added that units affordable to individual at 60, 70, 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) are for teachers, office workers, people who live in this community right now, and use restrictions protect community members from being displaced. She urged the committee to identify strategies on which they can come together.

Regarding the AHA, Karen said she appreciated Jo Ann Preston's comments on low-income housing. She added that the state will approve ARPA funds this week and make \$115 million available for public housing. She hoped that the AHA would try to seek some of those funds.

Patricia claimed that 40B developers do not have a good track record in Arlington, asserting that there were excess profits from a 40B project on Brattle Street that were not returned to the town. Kelly commented that Patricia had said this at past meetings and asked if there was evidence to support this claim. Patricia said it was on a Select Board agenda. She feels the best way forward is to purchase existing units and make them affordable.

Karen invited every member of the community to read the plan, noting that it is not exclusively focused on 40B development.

Kelly said that there isn't a single strategy that will solve Arlington's affordability problem and the plan presents a range of strategies for individuals at various income levels. She said that the Housing Plan is being created according to DHCD regulations as part of Chapter 40B, which may be causing some of the confusion. As such, it's concerned with housing for a range of needs, and not exclusively focused on affordable housing.

Karen asked to pause to celebrate the creation of 48 new affordable housing units that just became available from the Housing Corporation of Arlington through the Downing Square Broadway Initiative. It demonstrates what's possible in Arlington.

Kelly invited members of the public to share their comments on overall strategies or feedback. Don is feels that the plan lacks an analysis on how more housing would impact the public school system. He thinks there should be an analysis of how many additional classrooms would be required and how additional housing would affect existing neighborhoods. He asserted that the Town would need to add 6,000 housing units through 40B to reach 10%.

Steve disagreed, saying that 5.5% of Arlington's housing is on the subsidized housing inventory (SHI), and that the shortfall is approximately 900 units. He

added that in projects for which there is a Comprehensive Permit granted under 40B, all units can be included on the SHI, even the ones that aren't income restricted. If 40B projects exclusively were used to 10% statutory threshold, the Town would need to add only 900 or so units. Steve added that he feels the Town's goal should be to reach greater than 10% to meet the need stated in the plan.

Kristen Anderson asked about the average annual income level of a more diverse population we're trying to attract to Arlington. Kelly responded that the income limits are set by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), but are summarized in the plan. Steve shared that Arlington is part of the "Boston-Cambridge-Quincy MA-NH HUD Metro Fair Market Rent Area", and the 2021 median family income for this area is \$120,800. Low-income housing is based on 80% of the median family income, and the dollar amount varies according to family size. For a family of four, this would be an income of \$101,050; for a family of 1, \$70,750; for a family of two, \$80,850; and there are different amounts for other household sizes. Kelly noted that this information is on page 42 of the plan. Jenny clarified that Steve's information is from the original data source and is organized by household size so there is not one number for all households. There are different categories of income limits – extremely low, very low, and low income. The table below the table of income levels provides additional information for various household types.

Guillermo Hamlin observed that there are two places in the plan (page 38 and 67) that mention "misinformation" and asked for examples. Kelly did not have examples to offer but would ask the consultant to add them.

Jo Anne Preston said that the AHA provides more than 1,000 units of affordable housing, some of the oldest affordable housing in Arlington, and that the plan needs to address maintenance in affordable housing. She noted that the AHA provides Section 8 vouchers. The vouchers are given to individuals, who pay one-third their income in rent and the rest is paid by the government. She feels that if vouchers were tied to specific projects, then the voucher holders wouldn't be able to take them anywhere they wanted. Kelly shared that there are several strategies in the plan that address the AHA and would like to hear from Jo Ann on those.

Karen and Jo Anne discussed whether ARPA funds are available to the AHA. Jo Anne thinks they are only available for certain categories of expenses, not for capital improvements. Kelly suggested that Karen and Jo Anne continue the discussion offline.

2. December 16 ARB meeting for Housing Plan presentation

Jenny said that the ARB's December 16 meeting will be dedicated to a presentation by the consultant on the Housing Plan. The ARB could potentially adopt it at a later meeting. Jenny shared that we really want to hear from people

about what strategies should be prioritized, adding that she has heard from Jo Anne regarding the AHA potentially creating new affordable housing, such as purchasing homes for units. She invited people to share their priorities to Kelly. Although we may not agree on everything, there is not one way to create affordable housing. The term, “40B”, means a lot of different things – it is the state law as well as shorthand for a type of affordable housing development – which can lead to a lot of confusion. She doesn’t want anyone to feel dismissed during these conversations.

Patricia asked if the HPIC would be voting on the plan. Patricia would like to vote on the plan before it goes to the Select Board. Jenny clarified the process going forward: the ARB will review the draft plan and suggest revisions, those revisions will be combined with committee and other revisions, the ARB will then receive and adopt a revised plan, and then it will go to the Select Board for adoption. Jenny said the HPIC is welcome to make a recommendation, however she heard that two members of the committee would like more time to review the draft before doing so.

3. Review and Approve Minutes from October 21 and November 4

On the minutes from October 21, Steve moved approval of the minutes, seconded by Karen. The minutes were approved (2-1). On the minutes from November 4, Karen moved approval, seconded by Patricia. The minutes were approved (2-0 with Steve abstaining).